

Part III. is devoted to the consideration of the relations of pharmacy to organic chemistry. Much labour has evidently been bestowed upon it, and the most important articles of the respective groups of organic products are arranged in a "syllabus" or tabular form, thereby facilitating the work of reference or comparison.

Part IV. points out the relations of pharmacy to inorganic chemistry, and furnishes to the compounder valuable formulas for the preparation of the phosphates, of the hypophosphites, and of numerous other salts which have been recently discovered or introduced.

Extemporaneous pharmacy forms the subject-matter of Part V. Three of its chapters are devoted to "prescriptions," "the writing of prescriptions," and "the art of combining medicines." These important but oft-neglected parts of a medical education are briefly and clearly explained, the author restricting himself to their practical exposition, and thus avoiding the tedious prolixity of the French writers who treat of the same subjects.

The appended prescriptions are designed "to illustrate the several advantages to be attained by medicinal combinations, and the means by which they may be most readily and safely fulfilled."

From the foregoing summary the reader will derive no incorrect idea of the general character of the Practical Pharmacy. Viewed as a whole, we find in it much to commend, and but little to condemn. Being, chiefly, a compilation from standard works of the highest authority on pharmacy, chemistry, and materia medica, it has just claims to a scientific rank; while the practical deductions and observations of the author render it particularly valuable to the practitioners of his art. The style is clear and unadorned, and the language is usually explicit. A close observer, however, is struck with the author's custom of using symbols and contractions instead of writing the words in full. The habit of confounding or compounding the Latin and English languages in prescriptions, insensibly acquired by all who are engaged either in prescribing or dispensing, shows itself frequently in these pages, as in such expressions as the following: "Take of *liquor ammonia*, sufficient." (p. 497.) "R—Water *q. s.* to make f3vij." (p. 497.) "Take of *pulv. pil. hydrarg.* gr. x." (p. 594.) "Take of *cortex pruni Virg. contus.* 3xij." "Syllabus of *spiritus.*" (p. 267.) "*Spt. sal volat.* is a very useful antacid stimulant" (p. 462), &c. &c.

Surely these should not be thus expressed in "A Guide for the Physician," lest our profession continue in its present habit of careless prescription-writing. The third edition will present the formulas as correct in language as they now are in quantities and doses, or we are mistaken in the character of the author.

R. P. T.

ART. XXV.—*Report of the Select Committee appointed to Investigate the Health Department of the City of New York. Transmitted to the Legislature, February 3, 1859. 8vo. pp. 211. Albany.*

No municipal government can be said to fulfil faithfully the leading and most essential object of its organization—to secure the personal safety of the citizen, to promote his comfort, and to minister to his individual well-being generally—which makes no provision for his protection from those influences which tend to destroy his health, reduce his physical and mental energies, and curtail the length of his days, by suitable sanitary regulations enforced, by enlightened and efficient officers appointed for the especial purpose. No community is well governed where the laws ignore what science and experience indicate as the demands of health, and neglect to provide for the means by which human physical infirmities are diminished, and the prolongation of life, of enjoyment, and of usefulness promoted.

What avails it if the citizen be made secure in life and limb from the weapon of the assassin and the assault of the ruffian, if, at the same time, he is made the inevitable victim of an atmosphere that has been rendered poisonous from a

neglect on the part of the civic authorities to prevent accumulations of filth, and all sources of filth, the overcrowding of dwellings, the bad construction of public buildings, and the carrying on, in the midst of populous neighbourhoods, of unwholesome trades and occupations—from their neglect to secure free ventilation, the free admission of light, and a thorough system of drainage and sewerage at those points in which they are demanded. How much is the citizen benefited by the ample security thrown around his property by the law, if he is allowed to be continually robbed of his health and vitality, by unwholesome and sophisticated food, by unwholesome dwellings, and by a deficient supply of water for the purposes of cleanliness and cookery, and as a drink.

A wisely planned and judiciously and strictly enforced code of sanitary regulations, is as essential to the physical safety and well-being of the citizen as is the most excellent criminal code that can be devised, aided in its execution by the most efficient police regulations, and the most enlightened and incorruptible magistracy. In some respects it may be pronounced to be even more so, inasmuch as the aggressions upon the person and the property of the citizen, against which the criminal code is intended to provide, are more open, tangible, and appreciable, and consequently more readily avoided and guarded against by each individual than malaria and infection—those unseen, subtle agencies which prey upon his health and jeopard his very being, and which are often generated around him and in his very domicile, silently, slowly, and secretly—the first warning that they are present being when their morbid and deadly agency is exhibited in the production of pestilential disease, and in the mortality which follows in its train.

Few, if any, of our cities can boast of the possession of a sanitary code, the faithful execution of which is adapted to afford to the community the desired security of health, comfort, and life. Some of our larger cities suffer annually, to a degree truly appalling, from the want of such a code. It is true that upon the eve of some approaching epidemic, or when pestilence has made its appearance in the midst of a community, there is immediately set on foot measures which are supposed to be adapted to ward off the first, and to arrest the latter. But these spasmodic efforts for the institution and carrying out of sanitary measures, even when conceived in wisdom and prosecuted for the time being with sufficient vigour, seldom yield any results of a permanently beneficial character. Too generally, the moment the cause for alarm has passed by, the measures are relaxed, and very soon afterwards abandoned entirely. It is only by the unremitting and strict enforcement of sanitary measures that their full conservative agency can be obtained.

It is to be sincerely regretted that, in the cities of these United States, where everything was available for their proper arrangement, that in their original projection, or, at least, in their subsequent extension, more care had not been taken to secure for them the most favourable sanitary conditions, instead of cupidity, recklessness, and folly being allowed free license to transgress every ordinance of civic hygiene—rendering the work of reform, whenever undertaken, one of extreme difficulty, involving an incalculable expenditure of money, and demanding an abatement of nuisances, which, in many instances, from the length of time they have been practised, have come to be esteemed as legitimate rights.

The very decided movements that have been recently commenced in different portions of the United States, especially in her larger commercial cities, towards a methodical and thorough investigation into the condition as to health of the different classes of the community, the causes, if any exist, by which their health and vigour are impaired, and their chances of life diminished, are to be hailed as an indication that the people are becoming awake to the importance of an efficient system of public hygiene to their physical welfare, and that there is now a fair prospect presented of the early inauguration of such a system in every municipality throughout the Union.

Before us we have the report of a select committee appointed by the Legislature, to examine into the provisions and working of the health department and sanitary laws of the city of New York, and to recommend whatever legislation may be found necessary to increase their efficiency.

The committee, in the fulfilment of the duties intrusted to them, instituted at once a searching inquiry into the actual sanitary condition of the different sections of the metropolis, and finding, upon investigation, that the rate of mortality, in proportion to the population, was much beyond that of other large cities of the United States and in Europe, they were next led to examine into the general causes to which this excess of mortality is to be ascribed.

From the concurrent testimony of many of the most eminent physicians and other citizens of New York, given in detail before the committee, it was found that the causes to which the unfavourable condition of health which there prevails, and the excess of mortality beyond that of other populous communities, are mainly attributable, are the overcrowded condition of tenement houses, the want of practical knowledge of the proper mode of constructing such houses, deficiency of light, imperfect ventilation, impurities in domestic economy, unwholesome food and drinks, insufficient sewerage, want of cleanliness in the streets, and at the wharves and piers, and finally, to a general disregard of sanitary precautions, and the total absence of a regularly organized, adequate, and efficient sanitary police.

That the committee are correct in referring the general unhealthfulness of New York City, and the excessive mortality which prevails amongst its inhabitants, to its unfavourable sanitary condition, is very clearly shown by the fact that those wards where cleanliness and free ventilation abound, where the drainage and sewerage are ample, and where the houses are roomy, dry, well lighted, and not overcrowded with tenants, will compare favourably in respect to the amount and character of the sickness that occurs, and the ratio of mortality in reference to population, with any other city, while they stand in striking contrast with the less-favourably conditioned wards. In one of the best of the wards the ratio of mortality in 1827 was one only in every 69.68 of a population of 24,046; whilst in one of the most unhealthy wards, with a population of 13,486, the ratio of mortality, during the same year, was one in every 21.96.

The facts revealed in the report under consideration, and of the general accuracy of which there cannot exist a doubt, render it not at all surprising that so large a portion of the densely-built and thickly-inhabited wards of a city apparently so healthfully located as New York, and in possession, as it is, of all the material elements of prosperity, disease and death should make such alarming inroads upon its population, producing an amount of mortality scarcely equalled elsewhere, and which is constantly on the increase. The committee show, in the course of their investigation, that a very large percentage of the entire population are placed under circumstances, which, if they had been purposely designed to effect their wholesale destruction, could not have been more effective in their operation.

Although the same frightful condition, in a sanitary point of view, which is shown, in the report before us, to prevail in New York, cannot perhaps, with truth, be predicated of any other city in the Union, yet we are very certain that, in all of them, a properly conducted investigation would reveal the existence of many a source of pestilential emanations—many a plague spot where least suspected, and prove most clearly the absolute necessity of a well-appointed code of civic hygiene to insure the safety of all who dwell within their respective limits.

“Great cities are certainly the pride of nations, but they require a paternal control, and all Christian and civilized communities recognize the duty of exercising it. The difficulty has mainly been in devising the mode of using this power judiciously, so as not heedlessly to place restraints upon personal freedom. The aid of science must sometimes be invoked to strengthen and direct the hand of government, and to guide legislation in the duty of providing remedies for existing evils. A due regard for the public health of populous and growing cities calls loudly for the practical application of scientific principles, resulting from investigation into the causes of increased mortality, and of the best modes of prevention. Such investigations are constantly in progress, and it is not the part of wisdom to reject the counsels which they offer.”

D. F. C.